

Subject: Comments regarding critical habitat designation for Orca protection

From: pauljallenmd@mac.com

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To: orcahabitat.nwr@noaa.gov

Please include waters under 20 feet deep at mean high tide in the proposed protected habitat for Orca whales in Puget Sound.

The nearshore habitat, including but not limited to estuaries, is absolutely critical in feederfish production which is the foundation of the food web that sustains Orca's as well as salmon species.

The nearshore habitat is more important in food production for the Orca's than the open water.

All federal and state regulations and activities must protect the nearshore habitat which also includes salt marshes and tidal flats.

Intensive aquaculture practices must be curtailed or modified to protect the shoreline or the food web in Puget Sound will suffer.

Estuary habitat should be restored and, or protected since it is the most valuable and productive form of wetlands.

Inclusion of the nearshore habitat (up to the mean high tide line) under the ESA Orca designation, will provide a means to protect these valuable wetlands and better insure the survival of Orca's and Puget Sound.

Please include these comments in the official record.

Sincerely,

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